

with you my witness. I know that God lives, and I am striving with all my soul to know God himself. I do not remember the time when I had any question about the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know as I live that Jesus lives, that he was and is the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh, and that he is our Redeemer.

I know that Joseph Smith opened this last dispensation. It is thrilling to me to contemplate the fact that the Father and the Son stood before Joseph in the grove and that the Father gave the Prophet a personal introduction to his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. I know that angels came and restored the priesthood to the Prophet and Oliver Cowdery; that God did establish again his church upon the earth; that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is his church; that Jesus Christ is the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved; that acceptance and obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which we have the honor to preach and are commissioned to carry to all the ends of the earth, is the only means of salvation for this world, both temporally and spiritually.

I shall not know these things better in the not-too-distant future when I shall stand before the Lord to give an

account of my work in mortality. As I bear you this testimony I pray that we shall all *fully* live the gospel and thereby qualify as true disciples of Christ, to obtain the promised peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. This I do in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **President Spencer W. Kimball**

President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency has just spoken to us.

The Choir and congregation will now join in singing, "Let Us All Press On."

After the singing, we shall be pleased to hear from President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

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### **President Kimball**

We shall now be pleased to listen to President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

## **President N. Eldon Tanner**

This is a glorious sight, indeed, brethren, to see this great body of the priesthood here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City, and it is most encouraging to know that other thousands are listening to these proceedings by closed-circuit broadcast in nearly 1,500 other buildings throughout the world.

We are all gathered to be directed by the President of the Church, a prophet of God, and other speakers from whom we have heard this evening.

We all know that the priesthood is the power of God delegated to man to act in His name in the office which he holds. No greater blessing can be given to a man than to have a testimony of the gospel and to hold the priesthood of God.

I think of this vast body of priesthood holders, all engaged in the work of the Lord, trying to promote the cause of truth and righteousness and build the kingdom of God; and we each have an individual responsibility to help do this.

We all know that this is the church of Jesus Christ, and that he directs the work of this church through the prophet of God, even Spencer W. Kimball. I hope we do all know that.

Think what it means to know that this church is the only church which has the priesthood of God—the Aaronic Priesthood, which is so important that John the Baptist himself was sent to bestow this priesthood upon Joseph and Oliver; and the Melchizedek Priesthood, which was conferred upon Joseph and Oliver by Peter, James, and John by the laying on of hands.

What a tremendous thing to think about as we contemplate the power and authority and the various functions of the offices of these two priesthoods. The Aaronic Priesthood can administer the sacrament and pass it to the members of the Church and perform other duties as assigned by the bishop. The priests can actually baptize people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; and it is so important that each and every one participating in such ordinances be clean and worthy to justify the confidence placed in them by the Lord.

### Worthiness

Brethren, I wonder if we take this priesthood too much for granted, or whether we really appreciate and thank the Lord for the confidence he has in us and the privilege we have of officiating in the ordinances of the gospel.

We cannot overemphasize the necessity of our being worthy of the responsibilities given to us.

I pray every night and every morning that our leader, President Kimball, will be blessed with the health and strength, with knowledge and understanding, and with the inspiration and revelation necessary to lead the Church as the Lord would have it done.

I pray that all of us as General Authorities will be led and directed by the Lord as we magnify our callings; that we may all speak with one voice and

live worthy of the offices which we hold; and that all priesthood holders and all the members of the Church throughout the world will so live as to be examples and influences for good among those with whom they associate, that the world may see our good works and become interested in the gospel, which is the plan of life and salvation to all who believe and live its teachings.

The whole purpose of our mission here upon the earth is to prove ourselves and help others to be worthy and prepared to go back into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

In order to do this we must live according to the teachings of the gospel, and the Lord has provided the agencies through which we can work to accomplish this purpose.

We have the family, and I would like to refer for just a moment to my own family. I was fortunate enough to have my father as my bishop all the time I was in the Aaronic Priesthood. When he was interviewing me, I didn't know if he was interviewing me as a father or as a bishop, but he interviewed me, and he told me how important the priesthood was and what was necessary for me to do to be worthy of that priesthood. He was the best friend I had, and I think every bishop should be the best friend a boy has outside of his family. He should know that the bishop is trying to help him to live worthy and prepare himself for the great blessings promised by the Lord to those who will keep the covenants and live according to the teachings of the gospel. It's wonderful to live in a home where the father is exemplary, where the influence is good, where regular family home evenings are held.

The auxiliary organizations, the sacrament meeting, and the priesthood quorums, all are so designed as to encourage us and help us to prepare ourselves.

They emphasize the importance of keeping the Word of Wisdom strictly, paying our tithing, attending our meetings, being honest, honorable, and up-

right in our dealings, dependable, and refraining from the use of drugs, swearing, telling dirty stories, homosexuality, and other evil and immoral practices, all of which are displeasing in the sight of the Lord and deprive us of such important blessings as advancement in the priesthood, going to the temple, and going on missions.

I am sure that no member of the Church holding the priesthood would want to do anything that would hold back the work of the Lord.

If he is with others who hold the priesthood or are not even members of the Church, his actions and his thoughts and influence should always be the very best so they can look to him as one who is helping to build the kingdom of God and save souls, one who holds the priesthood of God. That's our responsibility, boys, wherever we are. They expect us to live as we are taught and be exemplary.

The responsibility of a bishop or stake president is to help teach, train, encourage, and strengthen those over whom they preside to live and do these things to which I have referred.

A young man has the responsibility of so living as to be prepared for these things.

As we work together, the bishop should be the best friend a boy or man has outside of his home and, naturally, an example to us in every way, but the bishop and stake president have the responsibility of determining by interview whether a man is worthy for advancement in the priesthood, worthy to fill a mission, or worthy to go to the temple.

He will determine this by observation of the way we are living and keeping the commandments and through searching interviews, realizing that it is better not to go to the temple or to go on a mission if we are not worthy, and until we are worthy.

We have had young men and young women go to the temple unworthily, who, after suffering with a guilty conscience for some years, have come to the President of the Church, confessing

and wanting to know what their position is.

We have also had young men go out into the mission field unworthily, who lied to the bishop and stake president to get there. It is certainly not right and is most displeasing in the sight of the Lord. It is better to wait or not to go than to go unworthily.

We know there is great evil in the world and great temptation, and it is important that we resist all temptation rather than trifle with it for the sake of being popular.

### Responsible for proper interviews

With all this evil present in the world today, it is most important that those who are responsible conduct proper interviews.

Let us always remember that our main purpose, assignment, and responsibility is to save souls.

It is important that those we interview realize that they are *spirit children of God* and that *we love them*, and *let them know that we love them* and are interested in their welfare and in helping them succeed in life.

It is a great responsibility for a bishop or a stake president to conduct a worthiness interview. There is equal responsibility, however, upon the member who is interviewed. Careful, searching interviews need to be conducted always individually and privately.

When you interview a young man for a mission, determine through discussion with him what the Lord would want as an ambassador to represent him and his church. Let him explain, for instance, what the Lord would want in a missionary with regard to the Word of Wisdom, with regard to morality, honesty, dependability, tithing, obedience, devotion, etc.

Tell the young man that you are interviewing him on behalf of the Lord. The statements he makes will be commitments to the Lord.

Let him interview himself along with you. Would the Lord want him as

a representative? Does he measure up in every way? Remind him that the Lord knows, and the Lord will not be mocked.

Let him know that if there is something amiss in his life, there are ways to straighten it out. There is a great cleansing power of repentance.

He should know that it is much better to postpone a mission for a period than to go unworthily. In almost every case he can repent and prepare himself for a mission.

When there has been serious transgression, he must be referred to a General Authority for clearance, but not until both the bishop and the stake president, in searching interviews, are thoroughly satisfied that he has fully repented and is now completely worthy.

You must know also that an appointment is not to be made until the stake president has discussed the case with the General Authority to determine whether or not he feels it is time to conduct the interview.

If a young man has made a mistake, he should see his friend, the bishop, on his own, without waiting to be interviewed.

It is a time to rejoice when a young man who has made mistakes clears his life and can start anew, clean and worthy to be an ambassador for the Lord.

Remember, the interview is based on consideration, on sympathy and love. This is so important. Let the people know we love them and are only trying to help them.

You bishops and stake presidents might approach an interview for a temple recommend something like this:

"You have come to me for a recommend to enter the temple. I have the responsibility of representing the Lord in interviewing you. At the conclusion of the interview there is provision for me to sign your recommend; but mine is not the only important signature on your recommend. Before the recommend is valid, you must sign it yourself.

"When you sign your recommend, you make a commitment to the Lord

that you are worthy of the privileges granted to those who hold such a recommend. There are several standard questions that I will ask [because you are instructed to do that]. You are to respond honestly to each one."

An associate of mine mentioned that some years ago, when he held a position in his ward, he went to the bishop for a temple recommend.

The bishop was busy and said, "Now, I know you every well, and I will not have to ask you the questions before signing your recommend."

This member responded: "Bishop, don't you have the responsibility to ask those questions? It is my privilege to answer them. I need to answer those questions to you and to the Lord and would appreciate your putting each question to me."

And so it is. The Lord gives the privilege to members of the Church to respond to those questions in such interviews. Then if there is something amiss, the member can get his life in order so that he may qualify for the priesthood advancement, for a mission, or for a temple recommend.

Now, after you have put those required questions to the applicant, you may wish to add something like this: "One who goes into the house of the Lord must be free from any *unclean, unholy, impure, or unnatural practice.*"

### **Avoid degrading practices**

Brethren, we who lead the Church are responsible to see that you are taught in plainness. I, therefore, must make reference to a matter that otherwise I would not present in a meeting such as this.

There are evil and degrading practices which, in the world, are not only condoned but encouraged. Sometimes married couples in their intimate expression of love to one another are drawn into practices that are unholy, unworthy, and unnatural. We receive letters from time to time asking for a definition of "unnatural" or "un-

worthy." Brethren, you know the answer to that. If in doubt at all, do not do it.

Surely no holder of the priesthood would feel worthy to accept advancement in the priesthood or sign his temple recommend if any impure practice were a part of his life.

If, perchance, one of you has been drawn into any degrading conduct, cast it away from you so that when you are subject to a worthiness interview you can answer to yourself, and to the Lord, and to the interviewing priesthood officer that you are worthy.

Remember, you who conduct worthiness interviews are representatives of the Lord and you must conduct the interviews as the Lord himself would conduct them.

That is, there must be nothing immodest or degrading in your interview. Our interviews are not to be indelicate, or offensive, or pornographic in any way.

May I say here that occasionally we receive reports that a bishop or a stake president has been very indiscreet or indelicate in an interview, especially of married members.

It is not in order for a priesthood leader to list in detail ugly, deviant, or bestial practices and then cross-examine a member of the Church as to whether or not such things are practiced.

One of the General Authorities once interviewed a young man who had gone into the mission home who had made confession of a transgression which disqualified him from missionary service.

The General Authority was amazed at the sordid nature of what the young man had done and asked, "Where on earth did you get the idea to do things like this?" He was shocked when the young man answered, "From my bishop."

During a preliminary interview for the young man's mission, the bishop had said, "Have you ever done this? Have you ever done that?" describing every unworthy and depraved act he

could think of. Such things had never before entered the young man's mind, but they were in his mind now! The adversary put in his way the opportunity and the temptation—and he fell!

### **Conduct interviews in love, modesty**

Brethren, our interviews must be conducted in love, in modesty. Oftimes things can be corrected if you ask: "Would there be a reason you may feel uncomfortable or perhaps even dishonest to the Lord if you were to sign your own temple recommend?"

"Would you like a little time to get some very personal things in order before you sign it? Remember, the Lord knows all things and will not be mocked. We are trying to help you. Never lie to try to obtain a call, a recommend, or a blessing from the Lord."

If you approach the matter as outlined above, the member has the responsibility to interview himself. The bishop or stake president has the right to the power of discernment. He will know whether or not there is something amiss that ought to be settled before a recommend is issued.

How blessed we are to have the gift of discernment available to us as officers in the priesthood!

On occasion a bishop or a stake president will receive a confession from a member of the Church concerning a transgression that took place many, many years ago. That individual should have made confession long since but did not and, therefore, has suffered unnecessarily.

It is not always necessary to conduct a court in such cases. That is up to the bishop. You are entitled to inspiration and guidance, particularly if the individual has demonstrated through his conduct over the years that that mistake is not characteristic of his life.

### **Blessing of discernment**

How marvelous that inspiration

and revelation may accompany us in our duties! Brethren, be worthy of that.

We frequently hear accounts of how bishops and stake presidents, motivated by consideration and love, have been inspired in conducting interviews and have been able, where problems were present, to help members of the Church correct their course in life so that they became completely worthy to fulfill missions, to be advanced in the priesthood, or to enter the house of the Lord. And that's what we are trying to do—help these young men, through love and understanding and interest, to do those things which are necessary in their lives for them to enjoy the blessings of the faithful.

Again I say, what a blessing that we have discernment and revelation and inspiration to guide us in our main purpose, which is to save souls, yes, even our own, and to help prepare our members to understand the purpose of their mission here upon the earth, and to prepare themselves to go back into the presence of our Heavenly Father!

Now, brethren, we are about to hear from our beloved president, Spencer W. Kimball, a prophet of God through whom the Lord himself directs this church. May we all listen, believe, and follow him, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

## President Spencer W. Kimball

It is a great joy to greet the priesthood of the Church this glorious night. All over the world we gather to worship the Lord and give him praise.

### Honor womanhood

My brothers in the priesthood, it was a great thrill recently to have tens of thousands of the sisters of the Church assemble in hundreds of places around the world in a special meeting for the women of the Church. You will have had your own reports from your wives and sisters, mothers, and daughters about the meeting. We feel gratified that we were able to hold the meeting and that technology made it possible. We love the women of the Church! We have great respect for them.

In following up on that event, I want to counsel you as sons, brothers, fathers, and husbands. As you serve with the women of the Church, follow what Paul said when he urged Timothy to "intreat . . . the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all

purity" (1 Tim. 5:1-2). We men of the priesthood ought to so do. We must be different than other men, and I am sure most priesthood holders are. Paul's suggestion that we treat older women as if they were our mothers and younger women as if they were our sisters and to do so with "all purity" is excellent instruction. Men of the world may disregard women or see them only as objects of desire or as someone to be used for selfish purposes. Let us, however, be different in our conduct and in our relationships with women.

Peter urged us to give honor unto our wives. (See 1 Pet. 3:7.) It seems to me we should be even more courteous to our wives and mothers, our sisters and our daughters, than we are to others. When Paul said that a man who did not *provide* for his own and those of his own household was "worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. 5:8), I like to think of providing for our own as including providing them with affectional security as well as economic security. When the Lord told us in this dispensation that